# Landscape Maintenance Considerations for Homeowner Associations

Save Money and Have Safe, Attractive Landscapes

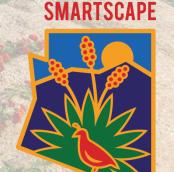
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**Smartscape** 

U of AZ Maricopa County Cooperative Extension





## 1. Consider landscape plants a long-term investment

Trees and shrubs have monetary value

Based upon:

- species
- size
- age
- function
- condition



Donna DiFrancesco, City of Mesa

Shade trees can lower cooling bills in summer



## Poor care practices lower plant value

- Destroy natural aesthetic
- Ruin property curb appeal
- Shorten plant life expectancy
- Increase plant replacement costs





**DLC Resources** 

Create hazards and potential for damage



## 2. Allow shrubs to maintain a natural shape

- No shearing
- If needed, do renovation pruning every 2-3 years
- If size is the issue, the wrong plants were chosen





## Why is shearing discouraged?

- Keeps the plant in a stressed condition
  - increases plant water requirement (\$)
  - decreases the life span of plant (\$)
- Plants become twiggy and unsightly
- Unnecessary trips to the landfill (\$)
- Noise and air pollution

healthy desert ruellia



sheared



## Shearing wastes time and money

- Time is better spent
  - renovation pruning
  - maintaining irrigation
  - scouting for plant problems (pests & diseases)

leak





adjusting controller



## 3. Prune only when necessary

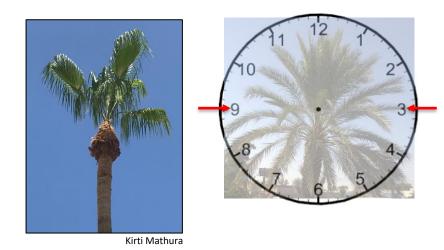
### Reasons to prune branches - the 4 Ds:

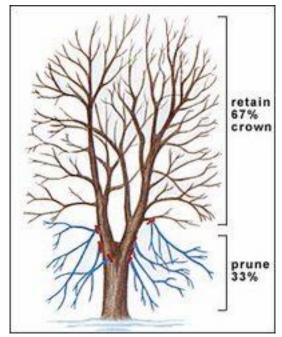
- 1. dead
- 2. damaged
- 3. decayed
- 4. diseased



## Prune trees for safety and plant health

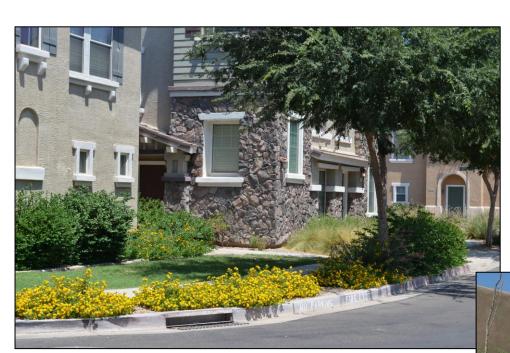
- Include tree care in the budget
- Palms: don't prune above 9 and 3 o'clock
- Gradually raise crown of trees
- Remove no more than 25% of branches annually
- At least 2/3 of tree height should remain covered with branches
- NEVER "TOP" TREES!







## A truck and trailer filled with plant trimmings does not mean an HOA is getting its money's worth from the landscape maintenance company







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#### 4. Allow some leaf litter to remain on soil

#### Leaf litter:

- replenishes soil organic matter
- releases plant nutrients
- supports healthy soil microbes
- helps moderate soil alkalinity

#### **Blowers:**

- require fossil fuel (or electricity)
- pollute the air with particulates
- are loud and cause noise pollution



## 5. Use plants adapted to the desert

- Poorly adapted plants
  - require more water and other care
  - often are more prone to pest attacks and nutrient deficiencies
- Desert adapted plants
  - are better able to survive the hot summers and cold winter nights
  - do not require fertilizer or other soil modification
  - often require less water than exotics





Asset Landscaping



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#### Turf and trees don't mix well in the desert!

- Bermudagrass does not tolerate shade
  - even tree pruning won't correct this problem
- Frequent, shallow sprinkler irrigation causes trees to grow quickly, with weak branching and shallow roots
- Lawnmowers and weed whackers damage trees







## 6. Install and maintain adequate irrigation for all plants

- As large plants grow, more water is required
  - more drip emitters are required annually, moved out to canopy edge
- Water deeply and infrequently
  - shallow watering:
    - causes salt build up in soil
    - wastes water to evaporation
    - results in shallow root development
    - makes plants less resilient to environmental extremes



Donna DiFrancesco, City of Mesa

- Zone and irrigate plants by their water requirements
  - trees, shrubs, perennials, cacti, annuals, and turf should all be on separate watering schedules



## Check irrigation systems frequently











## 7. Hire a trained professional

The lowest bid is *not* always a bargain!







- Smartscape trained professional
- Arizona Certified Landscape Professional (ALCA)
- International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified Arborist



## **Smartscape**

#### Classes include:

- Plants, Soil, and Water
- Landscape Design & Renovation
- Plant Selection and Installation
- Drip Irrigation Design & Installation
- Landscape Water Management & Irrigation Controllers
- Maintaining Desert Adapted Plants
- Plant Disorders
- Desert Adapted Plants
- Exam
- Resources & Marketing / Certificates of Completion





## Reduce costs and improve property values within your HOA

- 1. Consider landscape plants a long-term investment
- 2. Allow shrubs to maintain natural shape
- 3. Do not prune trees unless necessary
- 4. Allow some leaf litter to remain on soil
- 5. Use desert adapted plants
- 6. Install and maintain adequate irrigation systems
- 7. Hire a trained professional



### Other sources of information

University of Arizona Cooperative Extension:

free publications: <a href="https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs">https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs</a>

Maricopa County Master Gardener Help Desk

call: 520.549.1173

email: maricopacountyplanthotline@gmail.com

- Arizona Municipal Water Users Association (AMWUA): <u>www.amwua.org</u>
- Smartscape:

website: <a href="http://www.smartscape.org">http://www.smartscape.org</a>

https://extension.arizona.edu/maricopa-smartscape

